

Executive Summary
Summary on Broadband Training Programs
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The objective of this part of the study is to collect and analyze information as to public and private opportunities for residents to obtain access to broadband services and to learn to use them. This is important information as “research on the digital divide has offered important insight into the economic costs and nature of digital exclusion in America today. These studies illustrate the benefits that broadband can bring to both individuals and society related to consumer welfare, worker training, e-government services, education, economic growth and civic participation.”¹

Recent geographical analyses have shown that although New Jersey overall has a broadband penetration rate of 72 percent, the penetration rate varies widely by place, and there are areas with much higher rates of nonadoption.² Furthermore, analysis of the New Jersey household survey data identified lack of experience in using the Internet by the head of the household as a significant behavioral factor for broadband non-adoption. Training programs that provide this experience, then, have the potential to positively impact household adoption.

In this part of Planning Project 4 we:

- Expand on the work begun in Summary of Some Broadband Adoption Programs in the State of New Jersey.³
- Examine the training grants of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development for the 4 year period from 2008 to 2011 to find those related specifically to internet/broadband training.
- Use the New Jersey Training Opportunities website (www.njtopps.org) to examine the outcomes of grants and courses; specifically, did the courses enable the students to find jobs, and, if possible, what kinds of jobs?

Experience with Some Broadband Adoption Programs in the State of New Jersey

In March 2012 we conducted a survey of the programs listed and discussed in *Summary of Some Broadband Adoption Programs in the State of New Jersey* to determine the numbers of people who have participated in the programs and, in the case of courses, whether the courses enabled the students to find jobs, what kinds of jobs, and at what level of pay. Of the 22 programs listed we received useful responses from 3 of the Computer Literacy/Digital Education/Workforce Development Programs, and from 1 of the BTOP-Funded programs. The response rate was low and the limited available data shows minimal impact.

¹ Poverty, Inequality, and the Social and Political Effects of the Digital Divide, Amy Bach and Todd Wolfson, Rutgers University, p. 2.

² American University Investigative Reporting Workshop, American University School of Communications, www.citylimits.org.

³ Amy Bach and Todd Wolfson, Summer 2011.

Training grants from N.J. Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWFD)

During the period 2008 through 2011, 1,027 grants were made by the New Jersey Department of LWFD through its Office of Customized Training across most of New Jersey's industries. There were 27 grants from firms in the information industry, including print and on-line publishers, telecommunications companies, and other information companies. More than half of the training programs in information were in the central part of the state, mainly in Mercer and Middlesex counties. The rest were scattered through northern New Jersey, and in the south in Mt. Laurel and in Atlantic County.

Overall, 11% of trainees were hired. Of industries in which more than a handful of companies participated in the program, the information industry hired the highest percent of trainees (27%). Although the information industry's cost per trainee was higher than average (at \$1,849 versus the average of \$1,172), it hired such a large proportion of trainees, that its cost per new hire was \$5,300 or 33% below the average.

About 40 different kinds of training programs received grants. While none were specifically for broadband use, the closest fits are grants for PC skills and business communications. Among all industries in New Jersey, PC training was one of the most frequently offered types of training, followed closely by business communications. This analysis shows the widespread need and applicability for computer literacy skills for job seekers.

New Jersey Training Opportunities Website

The New Jersey Department of LWFD offers an enormous array of information and services to job seekers, guidance counselors, and companies looking to hire workers. Among those is its New Jersey Training Opportunities web site (www.njtopps.org). The web site has information about training programs accessible by both occupation and industry. The trainers are supposed to provide information at the end of the program as to number of students who have taken the courses, and their salaries 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years after leaving the program. Thus the job seeker can check the "Report Card" to get that information and use it to compare outcomes from various training providers.

The TOPPS system provides helpful information for people who can manage to negotiate their way through it. For this study we conducted a search through the website in April and May 2012. We examined the following information provided for approximately 3,000 programs of the—literally--thousands on the website: the skill level of the courses offered, whether the courses are job oriented, whether the enrollees obtained jobs in the fields in which they took courses, and the pay rates for those jobs.

We identified two groups of courses: first, courses related to basic computing skills in Information and Technology, Manufacturing, and Marketing, Sales, and Services, and,

second, courses related to basic computing skills in specified geographic areas. Of 3,000 courses investigated, we found all the relevant information for 22 courses.

The institutions showed a reasonable success rate in helping people get jobs. Of the 22 courses, more than half showed that within 6 months of finishing the course more than half the students had jobs in the fields they were trained in, and that percentage rose at the one year mark. The wages paid to students were clearly entry level, with most less than \$30,000. The highest-- at \$43,000-- was for people who learned Microsoft skills.

One concern, however, is that this website doesn't help the job seeker who lacks access to the Internet and computer skills. Among the frequently asked questions (FAQs) for NJTOPPS is the following question:

If I don't have a computer with access to the Internet for this process, how can I get on the list?

The answer to the FAQ is:

You can enter your information by going to any One-Stop Career Center office and using the public access computers.⁴

A job seeker needs web access and some level of Internet skills to use the information that is available for finding a job. However, the website does not have a specific and obvious reference as to where one can get training in broadband or even basic computer skills. In fact, going to the website and looking up "basic computer skills" returns the information "**No programs met your search criteria.**"

⁴ <http://www.njtopps.org/VendorFaqs.aspx>